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ISRAEL: SYRIAN HIT TEAM BEHIND BEIRUT BOMB MASSACRE

A CRACK team of Syrian assassins masterminded the latest car bomb explosion in Beirut that killed at least 27 people, Israeli military experts charged yesterday.

Sources in Jerusalem said the terrorists were controlled by intelligence operatives in Damascus who wanted to send a "deadly message"

to Amin Gemayel, the embattled Lebanese president.

The death car — a late-model Mercedes packed with 550 pounds of explosives, gasoline and oxygen bottles — exploded in a huge ball of flames and shrapnel just 30 yards from the headquarters of Gemayel's Phalange Party.

At least 105 people were injured — some critically — when the remote-controlled device leveled a crowded shopping district in the Christian quarter of East Beirut on Tuesday.

Israeli sources insist the bloody midday blast was a Syrian "pressure ploy" to force Gemayel

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to accept Syrian terms for a new political order in Lebanon.

The structure for which the Syrians have been pushing would give more power to Shiite Moslems and the Druse — and considerably less to Gemayel's Christian coalition.

In the last week, 400 people have died and 800 have been wounded in fighting.

Meanwhile, officials said that in the last 48 hours, some 1100 crack Syrian paratroopers have moved into Lebanon's central mountains to reinforce the anti-Gemayel militias.